

Montana Hall, Montana State University
West Garfield Street
Bozeman
Gallatin County
Montana

HABS No. MT-25

HABS
MONT,
16-BOZ,
2 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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MONT,
16-Boz,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MONTANA HALL, MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

HABS No. MT-25

ADDRESS: West Garfield St., Montana State University
Campus, Bozeman, Gallatin County, Montana.

OWNER: State of Montana

OCCUPANT: Montana State University

USE: Administrative offices and classrooms

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The early years of the 1890's were full of excitement for the young state of Montana and the various cities that were vigorously campaigning for the site of its capitol. Bozeman lost its bid to become the capitol city, but the land it had set aside for this purpose became the campus of the first of the state colleges to open in the state.

The Legislative assembly of 1893 allocated the sites of the various branches of the educational and custodial systems of Montana, and established in Bozeman the Agricultural College of the State of Montana and as a companion for it, the Agricultural Experiment Station. The bill was signed by Gov. Rickards on Feb. 16, 1893. The College opened in rented and donated quarters in town on April 17, 1893, with eight students enrolled.

It was not until 1895 that the Legislature approved funds for enough permanent buildings to house the College on its own campus. John C. Paulsen, State Architect, prepared plans for Main Hall (now Montana Hall), a Chemistry Building, a Drill Hall, Work Shops and a Veterinary Building in Old English style.

The cornerstone for Main Hall was laid on October 21, 1896, and the building was occupied in April, 1898. When completed it contained an assembly

room for 600, the library, and quarters for the departments of domestic science, art, business, English, mathematics, modern languages and mechanical drawing.

Today, with its name changed from Main Hall to Montana Hall, the building houses the University administrative offices and some classrooms. A two-story vault has been added to the southwest corner and the cupola was removed following the 1927 earthquake, but the original character of the building remains.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The young state of Montana, granted statehood on November 8, 1889, was in the grips of the famed "War of the Copper Kings." Charges and counter-charges, votes bought and sold, and intrigue and chicanery were the order of the day as the new state tried to choose Congressmen and Senators, locate the capitol city and select sites for educational and custodial units.

While the major camps of the Copper Kings were battling each other, other cities such as Bozeman made a strong bid for the seat of government. After the rivalry for the capitol was narrowed to Anaconda and Helena, the other contenders received another state institution as a "consolation prize".

The federal Hatch Act of 1887 had made \$15,000 available yearly to sponsor Agricultural Experiment Stations in each state, and the Second Morrill Act of 1890 appropriated \$15,000 a year for the aid of a land grant college in each state, increasing \$1,000 a year to a total of \$50,000. To take advantage of these funds, the Montana Legislature passed a bill on February 16, 1893, locating the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Agricultural College of the State of Montana at Bozeman. Control and supervision of the college was given to the State Board of Education.

In March, 1893, the Board of Education met in Bozeman and accepted from a citizen's com-

mittee six city blocks which had optimistically been laid out and set aside for the state capitol should it be located in Bozeman, plus an adjoining quarter section of land which had been a part of the County Poor Farm Lands.

Quick action was necessary as a result of part of the federal law which stated that funds would be available for the college for the 1892-3 year if the school was in operation by June 30. Temporary quarters were borrowed and rented, and the Agricultural College of the State of Montana formally opened April 17, 1893, for a ten week term. There were eight students enrolled. The first full year term opened Sept. 15, 1893, with 135 students.

Although the college had been authorized and was operating, the Legislature was reluctant to appropriate money for buildings. It was not until 1895 that the Legislature authorized the issuance of \$100,000 in bonds with the security of 50,000 acres of land. By August, 1895, the State Board of Education had approved plans for the construction of a main building, a chemical and physical laboratory building, a veterinary building, a drill building and a heating plant. Bids were received September 28, with Charles Suiter of Missoula being the low bidder and receiving the contract.

The designer for the buildings was John C. Paulsen, State Architect. He was born and educated in Germany, studying architecture in Hanover, and later in Stuttgart and Berlin. Most of the architects of that time in this country were self-trained, or job-trained, and he was among the few with formal architectural training. In 1897, Paulsen was under fire in connection with the graft in construction of the Montana capitol building, and died in the midst of the investigation.

The corner-stone laying for Main Hall (now called Montana Hall) was a gala affair. A large procession paraded from Bozeman's Main Street to the center of the campus. The parade was led by the Bozeman Free Silver Band, the college military

corps, Company H of the Montana Guards, the local college board, the State Board of Education, the governor, the Masonic Order, the Ancient Order of United Workmen, and a large number of college students and faculty. The ceremonies were conducted by the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Montana; Governor J. E. Rickards was the main speaker of the day.

It was not until April, 1898, that the buildings were complete and students and faculty abandoned their temporary quarters scattered throughout Bozeman to move up the hill and into their new home.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS AND SOURCES

Avant-Courier (newspaper), Bozeman, Mont., Sept. 28, 1895; Oct. 24, 1896; April 9, 1898.

Burlingame, Merrill G., Montana State College 1893-1919, A Preliminary Sketch, Montana State College, Bozeman, 1943.

Cheever, H. C., Professor Emeritus; retired Director of the School of Architecture and Supervising Architect, Montana State College, Bozeman -- personal interview.

Johnson, Dorothy M., "The Graft That Failed", Montana the Magazine of Western History, vol. IX, no. 4, Oct., 1959.

Records of the Physical Plant, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana.

State Board of Education Minutes, Book 4, p. 199-200, 1917; Book 5, p. 70, 1918.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Of the group of five buildings erected on the campus from 1895 to 1898, Main Hall (Montana Hall) was the largest and dominated the campus by its central location on the highest building site there. It was constructed of pressed brick with sandstone trim; the style was classified by a contemporary newspaper as "Old English."

Numerous small changes have been made in this stately old building. The central cupola was

removed after the earthquake of 1927 that caused so much damage in the neighboring towns of Three Forks, Manhattan and Belgrade. The library which once occupied the second floor has been moved to its own building, as have the departments of domestic science, art, mathematics and most of the others that once centered here. The building is as full as it ever was, however. The Registrar's Office, Treasurer's Office and other administrative offices are located in it. The Department of Film and TV has taken over the loft space within the tall gable roof that was formerly the assembly room. Classrooms occupy the remainder of the space. A two-story fire-proof vault has been added to the southwest corner of the building for the records of the registrar. Gradually interior spaces have been altered to meet changing demands of the University's evolution. Students no longer have to traverse a corn field to reach the main entrance to the building, and dozens of other academic and dormitory buildings have joined Main Hall on the campus. It may be slightly outmoded, but it is definitely useful and will probably serve many future generations of students. _

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - 90' x 28'; three stories, full basement.

Foundations - stone 2'-0" thick; basement exposed approximately a half story above grade.

Wall Construction - brick bearing wall above the stone foundation; all walls furred out with 2 x 4's, 16" o.c., first floor exterior walls 20" thick; second and third floor walls 16" thick. Interior brick bearing walls -- basement and first floor, 12"; second floor, 8"; third floor, 4".

Openings - Main (north) entrance: The two oak doors, each 3'-6" x 8'-0" have four panels in the bottom portion and a single light in the upper section. The doors are set in a brick arch and are capped by a transom of two lights having a 43" radius.

Side (west) entrance: Here a single oak door 3'-0" x 7'-0" with a 2'-0" x 4'-0" light, framed by rectangular lights, replaces the original pair of doors which were 2'-10" x 8'-6" having a single light each, 22" x 36". An identical entrance on the east has been altered by an addition which was put on the building.

Windows: D.H. wood sash 1 3/4" with 1/1 lights.

Roof - Steep gable, approximately 66° pitch. Present roof covering is composition shingles. Cupola removed in 1927.

Chimney - brick.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan - Entry is gained through the north, or main, entrance by a flight of stone steps containing nine risers, passing through the door into a vestibule with brick lined walls and having a ceiling height of 17'-7". Nine risers lead upward to the main first floor level.

A room to the east of the vestibule and opening from it served originally as the president's room. A marble fireplace stood in the corner of this room adjacent to a walk-in vault. An administrative office opened to the west of the vestibule, and the flight of stairs leading to the main floor occupied the south end.

At the head of the stairs was a pair of doors (since removed) 2'-10" x 8'-3" having a 10" x 42" light in each and flanked on either side by an oak panel having a 8" x 55" sight light in each, which opened into a wide 17'-10" hall running east and west which linked the east staircase and entry (both removed) and the west staircase and entry. The east and west staircases gave access to the basement and the upper two floors. A pair of doors 3'-0" x 8'-0", having a single light 11" x 50" each and flanked by an oak panel having two lights 12" x 34 3/4" each at each end of

the hall gave access to the staircases. These doors have since been removed.

The northeast corner of the building contained administrative offices, on the main floor, while the northwest corner housed the registrar and bookstore -- jointly operated up through the 1920's. Three large classrooms occupied the entire south side of the building on this floor; today the business office and registrar have this area.

The second floor housed the college library, classrooms and office space.

The third floor, according to architectural drawings made in 1921, had a large assembly area occupying 3/4 of the central portion of floor area within the highest portion of the trussed steep gable roof. This assembly area was flanked on the north and south by small rooms. Direct access to the assembly area was gained by the west staircase. The room was 68'-0" in length (east and west) and 31'-0" wide. The east end of the room had a raised platform reached by five risers. The raised platform appears not to have been original, but does appear in the 1921 drawings. Behind the platform, stairs led into a hall, five risers down, that linked with the east staircase. Two large rooms were on either side of this hallway.

The full basement area, half above grade, housed offices and classrooms also.

Stairway - The east stairway has been removed. The existing west stairway is an open wooden unit with oak railings and balustrade.

Floor - T & G hardwood; tile in main(north) entry.

Wall and Ceiling Finish - originally plaster over brick with the exception of the north entrance which has decorative brick walls--

this space has an oak beamed ceiling.

Doors - five panel, transom over.

Trim - hardwood, ornately moulded.

Hardware - brass exterior locks on the main entrance.

Lighting - electric. The electricity was originally furnished by an experimental generator housed in the basement.

Heating - originally warm air heat that proved unsatisfactory; steam heat is now furnished by the campus power plant.

GENERAL SETTING

The building is centrally located on a high point of land on the Montana State University campus, facing north towards the city of Bozeman. In order to organize future development of buildings and grounds for both the University of Montana (Missoula) and the Agricultural and Mechanical Arts College (the name of the Bozeman unit at that time), the State Board of Examiners on April 25, 1917, engaged the services of G. H. Carsley, architect of Helena, with Cass Gilbert of New York City as consulting architect.

On June 5, 1917, the State Board of Education approved the employment of architects to make an examination of the campuses and to make "birdseye" sketches of the proper development of buildings, etc. to be submitted to Cass Gilbert for "examination, report, approval and signature as advisory architect." The payment was to be \$1,700 for each sketch, with Gilbert receiving compensation for acceptance of plans and expenses.

The Board accepted the plans of Messrs. Carsley and Gilbert on June 20, 1918. The "birdseye" sketch bearing the names of Cass Gilbert, consulting architect, Hughson Hawley of New York City, and G. H. Carsley, architect of Helena, and dated 1918, hung for many years in the President's Office at M.S.U.

The scheme called for a curved driveway to pass in front of Montana Hall. The idea was reinforced by a proposed underground Steam Distribution System, prepared by Charles L. Pillsbury Co. and dated July 8, 1921. If Gilbert had ever visited the site, it is doubtful if he would have proposed this formal Beaux Arts drive, for the hill was too steep and could not be negotiated in the winter months by automobiles.

The unpaved drive, dusty in summer and treacherously slick in winter, was finally removed in the mid-1940's; newly appointed President R. R. Renne ordered it taken out as one of his early administrative acts. John Paul Jones, state architect, prepared a campus plan that made Garfield, behind Montana Hall to the south, a divided avenue and the main approach through the campus. The area to the north of Montana Hall became an open grass area. Thus, Montana Hall found herself with her back to the street, and the west entrance became the one most used.

A one-story wooden addition extends to the east of Montana Hall. This is a permanent "temporary" structure that provides needed space for the University. It houses today the Office of Information and its subdivisions, the photography laboratory and the mail service.

Report By: John DeHaas, Jr.
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Reviewed by: Eleni Silverman
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